

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 014342

R 021210Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7628

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 BANGKOK 2194R

EXDIS

DEPT PASS CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MASS, SNAR, SREF, PFOR, PC, ASEAN, ECON, TH

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT ON VARIOUS
SUBJECTS

1. PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT INVITED DCM MASTERS AND ME
FOR LUNCH AT HIS HOME TODAY. IN THE COURSE OF A 2-HOUR
SESSION, A WIDE VARIETY OF TOPICS WERE COVERED, SOME OF
WHICH WILL BE REPORTED SEPARATELY IN GREATER DETAIL.

2. EFFECTS OF THAI ELECTIONS ON RESIDUAL MILITARY
PRESENCE. THE PRIME MINISTER OPENED THE CONVERSATION
BY STATING THAT HE HAD BEEN PLANNING FOR A LONG TIME
TO ARRANGE A PRIVATE MEETING BETWEEN US. THERE WERE
OBVIOUSLY MANY ISSUES WHICH WERE IMPORTANT FOR US BOTH
TO HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK OVER. HE ASKED WHETHER I HAD
ANYTHING PARTICULAR ON MY MIND. I ANSWERED THAT THERE
WERE SEVERAL IMPORTANT MATTERS THAT I WAS GLAD TO HAVE
THIS CHANCE TO DISCUSS WITH HIM.

A. THE FIRST WAS QUESTION OF THE EFFECT THE
FORTHCOMING THAI ELECTIONS MIGHT HAVE ON THE UNDER-
STANDINGS WHICH WE HAD REACHED OR WERE REACHING WITH
THE RTG ON THE RESIDUAL U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN
THIS COUNTRY. THERE WERE ALREADY STATEMENTS BEING
MADE BY POLITICIANS AND ARTICLES APPEARING IN THE
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PAPERS SUGGESTING THAT ALL, REPEAT, ALL AMERICAN

PERSONNEL SHOULD LEAVE.

B. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT WHILE HE WAS UNFAMILIAR WITH THE DETAILS, THE ARRANGEMENTS WE HAD BEEN NEGOTIATING WERE ENTIRELY SATISFACTORY TO HIM AND THAT WE COULD COUNT ON HIS FULL SUPPORT. GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THAILAND FOUND ITSELF, THE RAMASUN OPERATION WAS ONE WHICH MUST BE ACCORDED THE HIGHEST PRIORITY. IN HIS VIEW, IT WAS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL THAT THE RTG BE IN A POSITION TO HAVE ACCURATE AND TIMELY INFORMATION ON ACTIVITIES IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES WHICH WERE INIMICAL TO THAILAND. RAMASUN AND RAMASUN ALONE WAS CAPABLE OF PROVIDING THIS SERVICE. AS FAR AS OTHER INSTALLATIONS WERE CONCERNED, THE RESIDUAL AMERICAN PRESENCE WOULD RECEIVE HIS FULL BACKING AND HE COULD NOT FORESEE THAT ANYTHING WOULD COME UP BETWEEN NOW AND ELECTION DAY WHICH COULD AFFECT THE ASSUMPTIONS ON WHICH WE ARE CURRENTLY PLANNING.

C. I AGREED WITH THE PRIME MINISTER THAT INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM RAMASUN COULD BE OF THE HIGHEST IMPORTANCE AND GAVE HIM SOME REPORTS FROM THAT SOURCE FOR WHICH HE EXPRESSED GREAT APPRECIATION.

3. BATTALION PROBLEM. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE WAS PUZZLED BY CHATCHAI'S REPORT ON THE WILLINGNESS OF THE U.S. TO EQUIP A LOT OF TROOPS. I SAID THAT THIS WAS THE QTE EIGHTEEN BATTALION PROBLEM UNQTE. CHATCHAI HAD TOLD US MANY MONTHS AGO THAT THE RTG WANTED TO BRING 18 BATTALIONS UP TO FULL STRENGTH. WE HAD ANSWERED THAT MAP COULD TAKE CARE OF THIS KING OF THING. THEN AFTER CHATCHAI'S RETURN FROM WASHINGTON, THE WORD HAD GOTTEN AROUND THAT THE SECRETARY HAD PROMISED TO FULLY EQUIP EIGHTEEN NEW BATTALIONS. THIS WAS MOST ASSUREDLY UNTRUE BUT BANGKOK WAS BUZZING WITH THE STORY. THE PRIME MINISTER THANKED US FOR THIS EXPLANATION COMMENTING THAT THE STORY MADE NO SENSE TO HIM AND THAT OUR POSITION WAS ABSOLUTELY CORRECT.

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4. NARCOTICS.

A. I SAID TO THE PRIME MINISTER THAT THE FLOOD OF OPIATES PASSING THROUGH THAILAND ON THE WAY TO THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES WAS A MATTER OF VERY PROFOUND CONCERN TO THE USG. HEROIN FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA WAS NOW AVAILABLE IN GREATER QUANTI-

TIES THAN EVER BEFORE ON THE STREETS OF AMERICAN CITIES AND IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT LARGE AMOUNTS WERE ALSO GOING TO EUROPE. I KNEW THAT THAI GOVERNMENTS HAD BEEN CONCERNED WITH THE OPIUM TRADE FOR MANY YEARS AND THAT THIS WAS NOT A NEW PROBLEM FOR THEM, BUT THE SITUATION APPEARED TO US TO DEMAND A MAJOR EFFORT ON THE PART OF ALL INTERESTED AGENCIES OF THE RTG. I NOTED THAT WE ESTIMATED THE BURMESE CROP AT BETWEEN 400 AND 450 TONS AND THAT ONLY A VERY SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THIS WAS APPREHENDED IN THAILAND. I ALLUDED TO SECTION 481 OF THE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE ACT NOTING THAT THERE WAS UNDERSTANDABLE UNHAPPINESS IN AMERICA AND I BELIEVED IN EUROPE WITH THE APPARENT CASUALNESS WITH WHICH THE THAI VIEWED THIS PROBLEM.

B. THE PRIME MINISTER AGREED WITH THE FOREGOING ANALYSIS AND SAID THAT HE TO SHARED THE VIEW THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD BECOME RATHER SLACK IN ITS ENFORCEMENT. HE SAID HE WOULD TAKE ACTION ON THIS MATTTTER RIGHT AWAY AND ASKED FOR SUGGESTIONS WITH REGARD TO MEASURES WHICH SHOULD BE PUT INTO EFFECT.

C. I SAID THAT THERE WERE PROBLEMS IN VIRTUALLY EVERY FIELD BUT THAT TIGHTENING UP CONTROLS AT THE BANGKOK AIRPORT WAS IMPERATIVE. I LEFT A MEMORANDUM WITH HIM SUGGESTING THAT THE SYSTEM OF REQWARDS BE REVAMPED, URGING INTERSERVICE COORDINATION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EFFECTIVE INSPECTION SYSTEM, BUT STRESSED THAT THE WHOLE RTG APPARATUS NEEDED PRODDING AND THAT THE ABILITY OF HIGH-LEVEL TRAFFICKERS TO SQUIRM THEIR WAS OUT OF JAIL WAS ONE AREA WHICH
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PARTICULARLY NEEDED ATTENTION.

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 021210Z FEB 76
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7629

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 3 BANGKOK 2194

EXDIS

DEPT PASS CINCPAC FOR POLAD

D. I SAID THAT WE KNEW THAT U.S. PROVIDED HELI-
COPTERS HAD BEEN USED IN THE PAST TO SMUGGLE NARCOTICS,
THAT SEIZED OPIUM AND HEROIN WERE VERY APT TO DIS-
APPEAR AND THAT THE LARGE PROFITS TO BE MADE IN TRAF-
FICKING APPEARED TO HAVE SERIOUSLY AFFECTED THE THAI

REPRESSIVE APPARATUS. MASTERS AND I PUT IN A KIND
WORD FOR GENERAL PHAO SARASIN AND HIS STAFF BUT
EMPHASIZED THAT A MULTI-SERVICE EFFORT WAS CALLED
FOR.

E. THE PRIME MINISTER ASKED FLAT OUT FOR THE
IDENTITIES OF SENIOR MILITARY PERSONNEL WHO MIGHT
BE INVOLVED. WE REPLIED THAT WE DID NOT HAVE
THE GOODS ON ANY HIGH-RANKING OFFICERS BUT THAT
THERE WERE ANY NUMBER OF COLONELS AND SUBORDINATE
OFFICERS ON THE TAKE. THE PRIME MINISTER REPLIED
THAT HE ENJOYED BEING A KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR
AND THAT HE WAS EAGER TO ENTER THE BATTLE AGAINST
NARCOTICS. HE REPEATED WITH GREAT SINCERITY THAT
HE APPRECIATED OUR CANDOR WITH REGARD TO THIS
WHOLE QUESTION AND THAT HE WOULD GET ON IT RIGHT
AWAY.

5. REFUGEES. I TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER THAT WE
WOULD STOP SUPPORTING THE NAM PHONG REFUGEES IN
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MARCH, BUT THAT THEIR MOVE TO LOEI AND THE
ASSUMPTION OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR FOREIGN SUPPORT
OF THESE PEOPLE BY UNHCR APPEARED TO BE ON THE
RAILS. THE PRIME MINISTER AGREED.

6. MILITARY EQUIPMENT. I TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER

THAT THERE APPEARED TO BE CONSIDERABLE CONCERN IN THAILAND WITH REGARD TO THE READINESS OF THE RTA AND THE AMOUNT OF EQUIPMENT IT HAD ON HAND. I NOTED THAT I HAD HAD A STUDY DONE BY JUSMAG ON THE AVIALABILITY OF AMMUNITION AND MAJOR ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT AND THAT THIS STUDY LED ME TO CONCLUDE THAT THE RTA WAS IN PRETTY GOOD SHAPE. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT HE HAD HAD A SIMILAR REVIEW CONDUCTED AND HE AGREED WITH MY CONCLUSIONS THAT THERE WAS A GREAT DEAL OF ALARMIST TALK BUT BY AND LARGE THE RTA HAD THE WEAPONS, AMMUNITION AND EQUIPMENT IT NEEDED. I SAID WE COULD UNDERSTAND THE EMPHASIS BEING PUT BY FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI ON SELF-SUFFICIENCY BUT SOME OF THE PLANTS WHICH THE RTA HAD WERE BEING GROSSLY MISMANAGED. I DREW ATTENTION TO THE INADEQUACIES OF RTG'S SUPPORT OF THE VEHICLE REBUILD PLANT IN KORAT AND THE PERSISTENT PURCHASING OF SUB-STANDARD MATERIALS FOR THE RTA BATTERY PLANT. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THE VEHICLE REBUILD PROBLEM BUT THAT THE MANAGEMENT OF THE BATTERY PLANT, WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO PROVIDE BATTERIES FOR THE WHOLE GOVERNMENT, WAS SHOCKINGLY BAD. HE SAID THAT FACILITIES OF THIS KIND HAD TO BE PROPERLY AND EFFICIENTLY MANAGED AND THAT HE WOULD LOOK INTO BOTH OF THESE MATTERS IMMEDIATELY. THE PROBLEM IN MOST CASES WAS THE INABILITY OF THE SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE RTA TO SEE BEYOND THEIR NOSES.

7. THAI POLITICS.

A. THE QUESTION OF THE READINESS OF THE RTA ELICITED FROM THE PRIME MINISTER A LENGTHY DISCOURSE ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A COUP AND ON THE COURSE HE IS SEEKING TO PURSUE. THIS PORTION OF SECRET

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THE CONVERSATION WILL BE REPORTED SEPARATELY IN GREATER DETAIL BUT THE MAIN THRUST OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS WAS THAT HE IS DETERMINED TO MAINTAIN DEMOCRACY OR "AT LEAST THE APPEARANCE OF DEMOCRACY" AND THAT HE WILL GO TO GREAT LENGTHS ACTING LEGALLY, IF NOT ETHICALLY, TO GET A WORKABLE MAJORITY IN THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS. HE SEEMED INTERESTED BUT CASUAL IN DISCUSSING RUMORS HE HAS RECEIVED OF A POSSIBLE COUP, STRESSING THE UNACCEPTABILITY OF A MILITARY REGIME IN TODAY'S THAILAND.

B. THE PRIME MINISTER WHO HAD RETURNED FROM

THE SOUTH LAST NIGHT THEN DISCUSSED THE STEPS HE IS TAKING TO ACHIEVE RECONCILIATION WITH THE MOSLEM MINORITY. HE EMPHASIZED THAT PREVIOUS GOVERNMENTS HAVE ALWAYS TRIED TO FORCE THE MUSLIMS INTO A THAI MOLD. THIS WAS OBVIOUSLY IMPOSSIBLE AND THE ONLY WAY TO ACHIEVE TRANQUILITY WAS TO PERMIT THE MUSLIMS TO LEAD THEIR OWN LIVES AS PART OF A GREATER THAILAND. MUSLIMS HAD BEEN SUBJECTED TO EVERY KIND OF COERCION AND MALADMINISTRATION. WERE HE A MUSLIM, HE WOULD FEEL AS THEY DO ABOUT THE SINS AND INIQUITIES OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE BELIEVED HE HAD SUCCEEDED IN CALMING THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH VERY CONSIDERABLY.

8. PEACE CORPS AND ETO.

A. AT THE END OF THIS SOLILOQUY THE PRIME MINISTER ASKED ME IF I HAD ANY OTHER POINTS OF DETAIL WHICH I WOULD LIKE TO RAISE. I REPLIED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME CONFUSION WITH REGARD TO THE WILLINGNESS OF THE RTG TO ACCEPT THE PCVS AS REPLACEMENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS WHO ARE DEPARTING AND I WONDERED WHETHER THIS REFLECTED ANY POLICY CHANGE WITH REGARD TO THE PEACE CORPS. THE PRIME MINISTER DENIED THAT ANY SUCH CHANGE HAD TAKEN PLACE AND ASKED ME TO BRING TO HIS ATTENTION ANY DIFFICULTIES WE HAD WITH REGARD TO THE INTRODUCTION OF VOLUNTEERS INTO THIS COUNTRY.

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ACTION SS-25

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R 021210Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7630

S E C R E T SECTION 3 OF 3 BANGKOK 2194

EXDIS

DEPT PASS CINCPAC FOR POLAD

B. I TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER THAT OVER THE YEARS THE U.S. HAD BEEN PAYING WHAT APPEARED TO ME TO BE EXAGGERATEDLY HIGH LAND TRANSPORT RATES TO THE ETO AND THAT WITH THE GREAT REDUCTION OF AMERICAN ACTIVITIES HERE, I WOULD BE SEEKING TO ARRANGE A MORE REASONABLE CONTRACT WITH THE ETO. THE PRIME MINISTER LAUGHED AND WISHED ME LUCK COMMENTING THAT THE THAI ARMED FORCES HAD WAXED RICH AT U.S. EXPENSE FOR MANY YEARS.

9. RICE. DURING LUNCH, AT WHICH WE WERE JOINED BY SUTI NOPAKUN FROM THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE. THE PRIME MINISTER HELD FORTH ON THE SUBJECT OF THE REFORMS IN RICE MARKETING WHICH HE WISHES TO BRING INTO EFFECT. HE SAID THE FARMERS WERE NOT REALLY ANGRY AT NOT RECEIVING THE PRIMISED SUP-PORT PRICE AS CURRENT PADDY PRICES WERE STILL FAR ABOVE THOSE OF PREVIOUS YEARS. ON THE OTHER HAND IT WAS OUTRAGEOUS THAT THE SUPPLY OF RICE TO BANGKOK WAS SUBSIDIZED FOR RICH AND POOR ALIKE. THE IS-SUE HAD BEEN MISHANDLED IN EARLY JANUARY, BUT HE INTENDED TO PROCEED BETWEEN NOW AND THE ELECTIONS WITH A SUBSIDY FOR THE URBAN POOR BUT WITH AN ECONOMICALLY VIABLE INCREASE TO THE REST OF THE POPULATION.

11. ASEAN. ASKED ABOUT WHAT HE EXPECTED WOULD COME OUT
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OF THE ASEAN SUMMIT, KHUKRIT GAVE A BRIEF AND HUMOROUS DESCRIPTION OF HIS FELLOW ASEAN LEADERS. LEE KUAN YEW- ONLY INTERESTED IN THE ECONOMIC WELFARE OF SINGAPORE. MARCOS - ONLY INTERESTED IN PERSONAL PUBLICITY. SUHARTO- ONLY INTERESTED IN TIL. THE MALAYSIANS AND THE THAIS - PEACEFUL BYSTANDERS WITH NO FIXED VIEWS ON ANYTHING. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT GIVEN THE DIFFERENCES WHICH EXISTED BETWEEN VARIOUS ASEAN COUNTRIES, NO DECISIONS OF ANY CONSEQUENCE WOULD BE TAKEN AT THE SUMMIT AND THERE CERTAINLY WOULD BE NO AGREEMENT ON SECURITY MATTERS.

12. COMMENT. WE HAVE BEEN TRYING FOR MANY MONTHS TO

ARRANGE FOR PRIVATE AND INFORMAL MEETINGS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND WERE PLEASED TO HEAR HIM SUGGEST THAT LUNCHEONS LIKE THIS ONE BE HELD ON A REGULAR BASIS. KHUKRIT WAS CALM AND HUMOROUS AS USUAL BUT WAS VERY EMPHATIC ON THE PROBLEMS WE RAISED WITH HIM. HIS OPTIMISM WITH REGARD TO THE LIKELIHOOD OF HIS ACHIEVING A MAJORITY POSITION IN PARLIAMENT DURING THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS APPEARS TO US TO BE UNJUSTIFIED, BUT HE IS CLEARLY DETERMINED TO DO EVERYTHING HE CAN TO OVERCOME THE FACTIONALISM WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT THE DOWNFALL OF HIS GOVERNMENT. HE SEEMED VERY DETERMINED TO TAKE ACTION ON THE SPECIFICS WE RAISED WITH HIM AND IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHAT FUTURE ACTION WE GET FROM THIS CONVERSATION. WHITEHOUSE

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED.

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